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MOURNING HER BRAVE.

[Engraved by H. Davidson from the painting by George de Forest Brush, in the possession of Thomas B. Clark, Esq.]

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AN ARTIST AMONG THE INDIANS.

[THE pictures of one of the younger artists of America, Mr. George de Forest Brush, have attracted attention in recent exhibitions for their original and vigorous rendering of scenes among the aborigines of the North American continent. Two of these paintings in oil we are permitted to reproduce here by means of wood-engraving—"Mourning her Brave," engraved by Mr. H. Davidson, and "The Picture-Writer," engraved by Mr. J. H. E. Whitney. We call attention also to the same artist's illustrations to "How Squire Coyote brought Fire to the Cahrocs," in THE CENTURY for January, 1885. At our request Mr. Brush has written out a few notes with regard to the Indians as subjects of pictorial art.—THE EDITOR.]

EVERY one who goes far West sees about the streets of the little railroad towns a few Indians. The squaws are fat and prematurely wrinkled; the men give the impression of dark-skinned tramps, and we seldom look under their dirty old felt hats to study their features. Certainly, when one first sees these wretched creatures, and recalls the pictures in the geography, the pages of travelers, or the imagery which the musical and high-sounding names—such as Crow Nation or Land of the Dakotas—awoke within him when a boy, there is some reason for feeling as if one had been deceived; as if a false charm had been thrown around these poor brutes. This, indeed, is the feeling of most people in the East to-day regarding Indians. One cannot speak of them without the certain response, "Well, as for me, I have not much faith in the noble red man"; and so deep is the prejudice against them that travelers who are aware of this sentiment, and who have lived long among the aborigines, knowing how much of interest and good there is to be told, are tempted to counterbalance prejudice with over-statement; they exaggerate the beauty and suppress all mention of the ugly that is to be found in their manners and life. In reading Catlin, one is oppressed with a certain partiality, a constant tendency to throw into relief all their good and to subordinate the bad.

It is true that, from the point of view of the civilized merchant, who loves one woman, lives in a stone mansion, and tastes the sweets of intellectual life, they are a sad sight, with their limited enjoyments, licentiousness, and coarse palates that can relish a boiled dog,—their old people blind and dirty, with brutal jaws and uncombed hair, and blood on the faces of old women, who have cut themselves in mourning, and which they refuse to wash off. But the question whether they are fit to enter the kingdom of heaven is apart from that of their artistic interest. Many people fail to see this; but such persons are as badly off as the farmer who lived in the house of a celebrated author which I went to sketch. On learning my errand, the old man eyed the moss-covered shingles and defective chimney

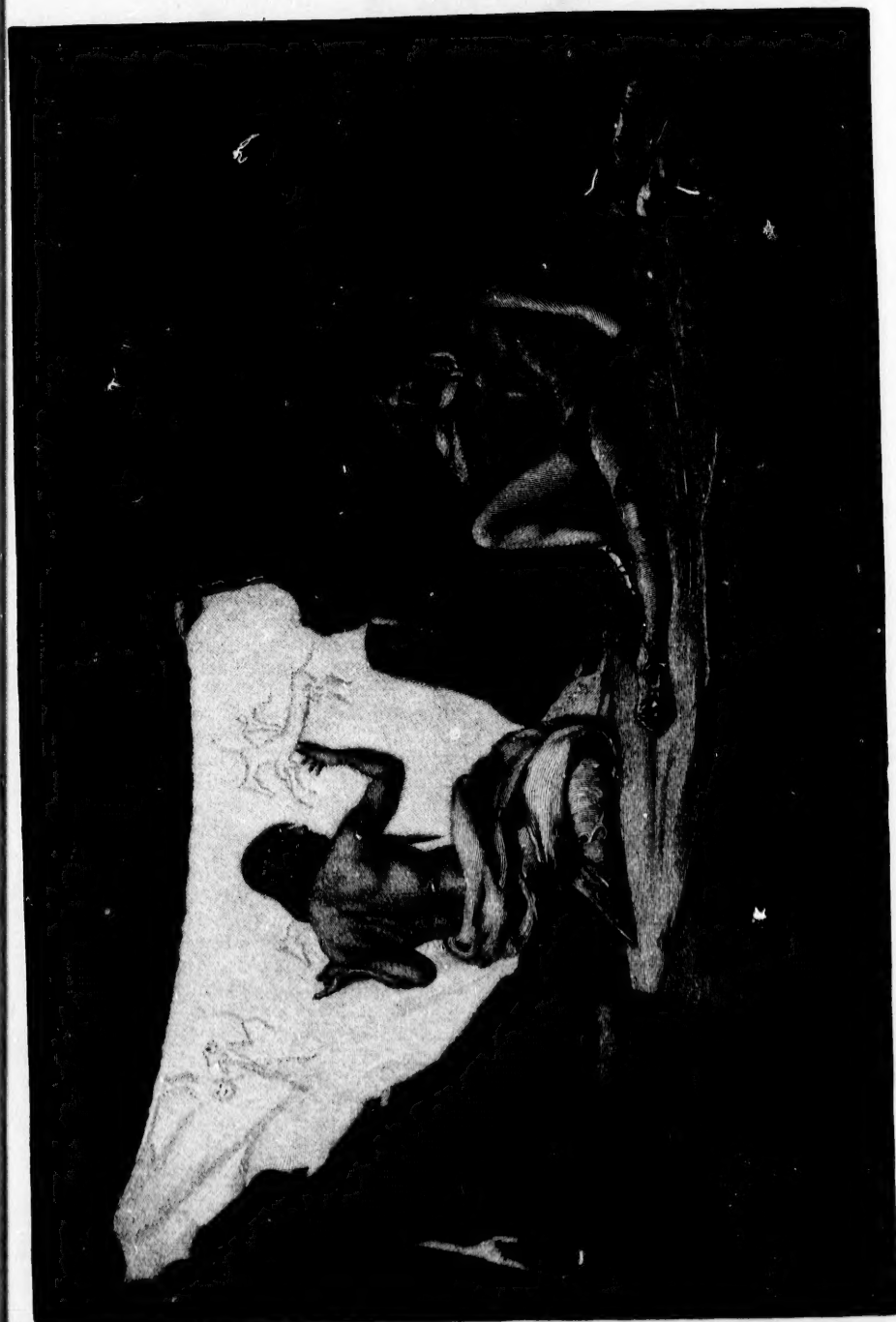
with a mixed look of humor and humiliation, and questioned whether it would not be better to return in the spring, when he hoped to have a new house in its place!

All that Rembrandt asked of the human figure was that it might exhibit light and shade; he never looked for pretty people, but found in this aspect of things a life-work. It is not necessary that an Indian learn to spell and make changes before we see that his long locks are beautiful as he rides against the prairie winds. A hawk is cruel, yet who has not loved to watch its spiral course in the summer heavens?

It is also a mistake to suppose that Indians are all homely. A really handsome squaw is rare, but there are more superb and symmetrical men among them than I have ever seen elsewhere, their beardless faces reminding one always of the antique; these are not rare, but are to be seen at every dance, where they are mostly naked, decorated in feathers and light fineries. Their constant light exercise, frequent steam-baths, and freedom from overwork develop the body in a manner only equaled, I must believe, by the Greek.

When we study them in their own homes, see them well fed, independent, unembarrassed, dressed in their elk-skins and feathers, dancing nearly nude when the November snows lie deep upon the ground, smoking their long pipes and chatting with the children about the door of the lodge, or sadly climbing the brown October foot-hills to bury a departed villager on some chosen cliff,—then they are beautiful. It is when we detach them from all thoughts of what we would have them be, and enjoy them as part of the landscape, that they fill us with lovely emotions. The vulgar think that only roses are beautiful; but the weed which we root up also illustrates the divine law of harmony. It is not by trying to imagine the Indian something finer than he is that the artistic sense finds delight in him.

We do not miss human refinement in the sow and her litter; we admire them, as we look over the old fence, simply as pigs, their tiny pink feet plunging into the trough in their



THE PICTURE-WRITER.
[Engraved by J. H. E. Whitney from the painting by George de Forest Brush, in the possession of Washington Wilson, Esq.]

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greed, and the little black brother trying to find room. The beauty of the maid who brings their food does not lessen theirs. So the Indian is a part of nature, and is no more ridiculous than the smoke that curls up from the wigwam, or the rock and pines on the mountain-side.

The custom of mourning the dead, as represented in the picture, is common to all the tribes of the North-west, I believe. I have witnessed it daily among the Crows. I know that we do not mourn in this manner, but death and grief we are all acquainted with. In the picture I was afraid of making the body too prominent, on account of the effect in the composition. In the engraving I fear the point is quite lost, and does need expla-

nation. "The Picture-Writer" is supposed to be a scene in the interior of a Mandan lodge. The Mandans were not a roving tribe, but built these large huts of poles and mud, and raised corn.

But in choosing Indians as subjects for art, I do not paint from the historian's or the antiquary's point of view; I do not care to represent them in any curious habits which could not be comprehended by us; I am interested in those habits and deeds in which we have feelings in common. Therefore, I hesitate to attempt to add any interest to my pictures by supplying historical facts. If I were required to resort to this in order to bring out the poetry, I would drop the subject at once.

George de Forest Brush.

MAY-BLOOM.

Oh, for You that I never knew!—
Now that the Spring is swelling,
And over the way is a whitening may,
In the yard of my neighbor's dwelling.

Oh, may, oh! do your sisters blow
Out there in the country grasses—
A-mocking the white of the cloudlet light,
That up in the blue sky passes?

Here in town the grass it is brown,
Right under your beautiful clusters;
But your sisters thrive where the sward's alive
With emerald lights and lustres.

Dream of my dreams! vision that seems
Ever to scorn my praying,
Love that I wait, face of my fate,
Come with me now a-maying!

Soul of my song! all my life long
Looking for you I wander;
Long have I sought—shall I find naught,
Under the may-bushes yonder?

Oh, for You that I never knew,
Only in dreams that bind you!—
By Spring's own grace I shall know your face,
When under the may I find you!

H. C. Bunner.